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## House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BENTIVOLIO).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
May 6, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable KERRY BENTIVOLIO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

### MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

### BANGLADESH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, more than a thousand workers have died from working in Bangladesh's garment industry.

In the latest tragedy, an eight-story building called Rana Plaza collapsed. It housed five garment factories. It has killed more than 650 workers so far, injured more than a thousand, with still more buried in the rubble. This stag-

gering body count occurred just 5 months after the Tazreen factory fire that killed at least 112 workers. Forty more incidents, including explosions and fires, causing death and injury, have taken place since the Tazreen factory fire.

I met with one of the Tazreen survivors when she visited Washington last month. She described the outrageous working conditions leading up to the fire. She toiled in a factory with bars on the windows and no place to run if a fire broke out. She told me how she jumped from the third floor of the burning factory to save her body from the fire so her family could recognize her in case of her death, and many of her coworkers jumped with her, but did not survive the fall. During our meeting, it became clear that it was only a matter of time before the next Tazreen would take place.

Two weeks later, Rana Plaza collapsed.

Unfortunately, these tragedies in Bangladesh are not isolated, and more of these tragedies, undoubtedly, will occur unless the major international corporations that keep these dangerous factories open decide to change their business practices. Clearly, there is a greater role for the U.S. and other governments to play, including the Bangladesh Government. However, the primary burden for action now lies with the major brands and retailers.

Let's remember what is at stake here: the lives of thousands of young women and mothers trying to scrape together an existence by working 12-hour shifts for pennies a garment.

They produce clothing under contract with corporations we all know well: Walmart, J. C. Penney, Mango, Benetton, H&M, The Children's Place, GAP, and Dress Barn, among others. The clothes these women sew in Bangladesh we buy here in America. Unfortunately, these young women are caught working in a garment industry

that pits supplier against supplier and country against country in a calculated race to the bottom.

Often, the margin for these corporations is subsistence wages and the needless disregard for the safety of these young women. That is the subsidy they receive—low wages and unsafe working conditions for the workers who produce these garments. Four million Bangladeshi workers in 5,000 factories provide clothing to Americans and to European brands while earning one of the lowest minimum wages in the world—about \$37 a month.

But they shouldn't have to risk their lives for the fashion industry's profits.

These young women are forced to work in factories with overtaxed electrical circuits, unenforced building codes, and premises without firefighting equipment and adequate exits, and in most cases, the exits are chained closed. Americans who are the consumers of these products are increasingly worried that the label "Made in Bangladesh" actually means "made in a death trap."

Why are the managers of these factories forcing these employees to work in these deplorable conditions? Because of fear—fear that the international brands and the retailers, which we know so well, will take their orders elsewhere because of a missed day of production, a late delivery, or a minuscule increase in production costs. The brands know this. That's why I believe they bear the ultimate responsibility for the horrendously unsafe working conditions in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

Corporate leaders in the fashion industry have a moral imperative to ensure that these tragedies do not happen again. These retailers and brands need to sign on to an enforceable agreement that will improve safety, called the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement. It was developed by the Bangladeshi trade unions and non-governmental organizations to prevent

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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